

MR. WILLIAM GILL,

CHEBOYGAN, MICHIGAN.

(WM. WAKEHAM

INTERVIEWED BY : and

) RICHARD RATHBUN,

August 22, 1894.

He has been here 18 years. Thinks they catch too many small fish. They catch them with pound nets and gill nets both. The main trouble is they are putting too small mesh in the pound nets. The spring fishing ground is no good in the fall. You take it this fall they will put in one net and catch perhaps 2 tons, and perhaps there will be 800 or 1000 lbs. of little whitefish about 6 or 8 inches long; it would take 6 or 8 of them to weigh a lb., and they throw them right out on the gut pile, as we cannot sell

*Experiences
Take too many
Small fish
P.
g
mesh*

*Spring & fall
grounds.
P.
W. f.
Small*

P, them. If a man could put them up in boxes
as they do sardines they might be good for
something. There are lots of them fishing
fresh. with 2 1/2 inch mesh. That is what we call
2 1/2 inch mesh, but they use it cornerwise
and it will hold a very small fish. The
law says 3 1/2 inch, but they do not go by
the law.

They fish some for herring here in the
fall, but pretend to be fishing for herring
mostly and not for whitefish. Lots of them
are fishing for whitefish when they claim
they are fishing for herring, and they get
a good many small whitefish in that way,
and just destroy them. When they bring me
a lot of those small whitefish I smoke
them. I would sell them as small as 1/2 lb.
fresh. I would rather have 2 1/2 lb. and
the smallest I would want would be not

fishing
m.f.
small

m.f.
eyes

less than 1 lb. They are the best to smoke and the best to sell fresh, and we can sell them either way, then.

Fish decrease

When I came here first I fished quite a little myself and could catch 5 tons where you cannot catch 1 now, and the fish were a good deal bigger than now. I felt the decrease worst about 3 years ago. There seemed to be plenty of fish before that. There are a good many more nets now and smaller mesh.

P. proper mesh

The proper thing to do to save the fish and bring them back is not to allow them to fish any nets smaller than 3 1/2 or 4 inches, for the pound nets, and there should be a law that would oblige them to do that. There is a law compelling them to fish 3 1/2 inch mesh, but nearly everyone of them has a finer mesh than that, and they let them do

There is no better law than the Canadian

P.
Small *etc.*

it. These men here often catch little fish about 6 inches long. They fetched me 18 lbs. one day and it took 6 of them to weigh a lb., little whitefish. It is just like planting a patch of potatoes and pulling them up just as they start to grow. I would like to see them stop catching these little fish because it is not right. It would be a good thing to let the fish have a chance to spawn, but at the same time if you allow them to go right on catching the little ones, what is the difference? If you allow the fish to spawn, and just as quick as they get big enough, let them catch the little ones you spoil the whole thing.

Spawning no
good if
small fish
caught

We catch lots of trout here in the spawning time, but do not catch many at other times. They do not catch so many this last 2 or 3 years, as they are getting scarcer.

Trout
season
decrease

There is no better law than the Canadian

Canadian
law

law for saving the fish, as they will not allow them to catch those little ones, and I believe that is a good thing, but here they do just as they are a mind to, and break the law and everything else to catch them.

When I came here they were not using so many pound nets as they are now. I used gill nets when I fished, but there were a few pound nets then, but nothing to what there are now. In pound nets then they used the same size mesh they do now. They used a bigger mesh for big fish they claimed, but they had a great many small meshed nets, but they were not so numerous then and it gave the fish a chance. They are getting too many fishermen according to the amount of fish, and with these small mesh nets they clean them right out. Between here and Alpena I dare say there are 300 pound nets, inclu-

P. ✓
G. ✓
history ✓

T. ✓
mesh

No.

Co.

P.

ding Thunder Bay. You go 40 miles up this shore and there are a pile of pound nets scattered along. There is one man down here has 7 nets within a mile, where there is a feeding ground, and it may be a small feeding ground and the fish will rush for it, and they will put their nets all around that feeding ground.

P.
descrip

string

They generally calculate to run their pound nets off the channel bank. They go in from 20 to 60 feet of water. They put 2 pounds in one string here; they will set one in 25 feet and another in 40, and perhaps another in 60 feet, and the fish cannot get past, and must go into one or the other. They have from 3 to 5 pounds on a string sometimes.

season

They put the pound nets in here the first of June, and are just pulling them

out now. They do the best fishing just about June 20 and up to July 10. This year they got pretty good fishing up to the first of Aug. There is no fishing with pound nets from now until about Sept.10, when they put the nets back again, but not on the same grounds. They go into a different place, but does not know why they do so, except that they go off on the reefs. The trout will go on to spawn about Sept.10, and they will run for a month or a month and a half, and when the trout begin to go away the whitefish come on, but it is very late in the fall and they cannot fish there late in the fall. They fish the pound nets all through Nov., and that is the time when they catch the biggest whitefish and trout in the pound nets. There are places where they catch some all summer. Yesterday he sent up 220 lbs. of whitefish, and expects

P.

Loc.

Trout.
Spawning

W. f.
Spawning

P.
Season

to get a good many more in a couple of weeks.

The principal fish they take in the pound nets now are whitefish. From Sept. 10 until about the middle of Oct. they will get nearly all trout, unless they happen to be on whitefish grounds somewhere off in deep water, and then they will get some whitefish mixed. After that time the whitefish come on again. They take herring in the pound nets where they have a mesh small enough. I can show you now where these people who claim they are fishing with big mesh nets, and will have 150 or 200 barrels of small fish mixed right in with the big ones.

They make a business of catching herring, and they salt them mostly. These people here generally send them to Mackinaw City. Trum-pour generally buys all their salt fish.

They get a good many walleyed pike in

P.

Catch

W.B.

Season

trout

herring

(small fish)

herring

walleye

P.
walleye

their pound nets at this time of the year. This last 2 or 3 weeks back the wall-eyed pike have been pretty plenty, and in the spring when they come in to spawn they get a good many. They come in along in March. They spawn up these rivers and creeks about here in May. They spawn generally in shallow waters. They begin to spawn about the first of May and spawn for about a month. They catch a good many while they are spawning, but do not catch near as many now as they used to. Used to go out in the river here and catch a boat load in a few hours. Yesterday morning we got in one little gillnet 22 lbs. of nice ones. There used to be 10 where there is one now. I never set a mesh for them less than 4 1/2 inch, and in that size I got them weighing from 2 to 6 lbs. That was in gillnets.

(3)

P.

You can set a small mesh and get lots of little ones, but I would not have them.

Perch
We get lots of yellow perch in the pound nets, and the biggest perch I ever saw, some of them weighing 2 lbs. I have been all through New York State and never saw any bigger than they are here.

*Sturgeon
Eel
bass
bullheads*
Once in a while we will get sturgeon, and sometimes grass pike and yellow pike and a few black bass here, but a very few. Do not get any bull-heads here now, but used to get lots of them. When I first came here I could go out with a hook and line and get as many as I could carry in a few hours.

Sturgeon
There are a good many sturgeon below here, but we are not getting as many as we did. We would get 4 or 5 every time we lifted 2 or 3 years ago, and now it is only once in 3 or 4 lifts that we get any sturgeon.

P.
Sturgeon
They never save the eggs here at all.

The biggest sturgeon I have seen here was
102 lbs. dressed, with the head on, and we
get them as small as 3 or 4 lbs.

m bass
rock "
green "
Never get the white bass here. We get
rock bass and green bass. Get quite a
few rock bass. There are green bass,
black bass and rock bass here, but I have
never seen any silver bass here. We do
not have any sheephead here, and I never
saw but one since I came here. We have
lots of lawyers, and throw them away, as
we cannot sell them. Do not have the
German carp here. Have any amount of
suckers. They are just about as thick as
they ever were. They sell them in the
early spring. Once in a while get the
speckled trout here. Do not get any buf-
falo. Do not know the gold eye.

Sheepshead

ling

G. Carp

suckers

Buffout

Buffalo.
mooney

We get a few long jaws. There is one place over here where they are quite numerous. Do not get any blue fins, but there are lots of them up above here, about 80 or 90 miles. We get a good many menominee whitefish here. We are not getting near as many of any kind as we used to, however. You could not get rid of menominees 6 or 8 years ago there were so many of them, and now I can sell all I can get, and more. I have had a man fishing here for me and he put out something like half a mile of gillnets and did not get but about 30 or 40 lbs.

There are double the number of men fishing here now than there used to be, and they have more nets according to the men. There are more people fishing now than ever before. People did not seem to

long jaws

blue fins

menominee

Fishermen
nets
no.

menominee

Menominee

be so anxious to catch them (menominees) 2 or 3 years ago; probably it was because times were better and they could do better at something else, and fish were lower then. Could buy nice trout for 2 and 2 1/2 cents a lb., and now I pay 5 cents a lb.

g.
loc.

They fish the gillnets off shore from 4 to 15 miles. They go over to Spectacle Reef Light a good deal. They fish in from 40 to 150 feet of water. In their gillnets they get all trout now, but get whitefish when the whitefish are on. They have regular menominee nets which they use for catching the menominees, and the size of mesh would be 3 inches. The size of mesh for the trout would be 4 1/2 to 5 inches.

trout

menominee g.
mesh

trout mesh

For trout they sometimes use 5 1/2 inch mesh but I would rather have 5 inch. Use the same as we do for whitefish; a good many now have 4 1/4 mesh for whitefish,

W. f. mesh

g. in the gillnets. 5 inches is small enough, however, for trout. If they would not fish with anything but a 5 inch mesh we would have more fish. Through a 5 inch mesh a whitefish as small as 1 1/2 lb. will go, but would not get very many that size. But you put a 4 1/4 inch mesh in and you will get a pile of little ones and not get a big one. Will get them from 1 to 2 1/2 lbs. right along in a 4 inch mesh. But if you have a 5 inch mesh a great many of the little ones will go through, and that leaves the big ones. I believe a man will get just as much in weight with a big mesh as he will with a little one. When I fished with gillnets I fished a 5 inch mesh all the time.

There were tugs fishing from here last spring, but they quit as they did not get

4. f. mesh

g. mesh

Lug

g.
Lug
anything. They did not have any tugs here until 2 years ago. They built that big transfer of Connables 2 years ago and they caught a great many fish, and then another party came in here either from Sand Beach or Bay City, and he run pretty strong a year ago. Connable was here also a year ago with 2 tugs and a large gang of men. They came here a little while this summer, and could not get anything and went away again.

Siscowet
We got the Siscowet here sometimes, but not many. I do not like the Lake Superior trout.

P.
g.
Shrinkage
When the pound nets are tarred they will shrink about $1/16$ of an inch. The gillnets will swell, and it sometimes makes them a little smaller in the mesh, but not enough to make any difference. They do not tar the twine or do anything to it, unless they tan it sometimes, and then it naturally makes them a little smaller.

Any rope or line that you put in the water will shrink some, but the thread of the gillnet is so small that it does not amount to much, but a pound net, with the tarring and using, must shrink quite a bit. I think it would shrink $1/8$ of an inch.

g.
where set,
season

The gillnets are always set on the bottom. They begin fishing gillnets when the season first opens and fish all summer, but they do not get near as many in the middle of the summer. First in the spring they get trout, and get trout right along all summer more or less. They get the most whitefish from June until about July 15.

trout

w. f.

They generally begin to drop off shortly after July 4. They catch a good many whitefish in Nov. with the gillnets. In the winter they do not fish through the ice to amount to anything with nets. Some do a little spearing. They spear in about 60 or 70 feet of water. They have a decoy and bring the fish up to the top. Those are

winter

Spearing

Spearing
trout
✓

all trout. Whitefish will not come up at all. Would get trout weighing from 2 to 18 or 20 lbs. that way. There are a good many people spearing in the winter and they get enough to keep the town with eating. But they cannot harm anything in the winter because they are all fish that have grown up.

Fykes ✓

They do not use any fyke nets about here except in the rivers they use them once in a while. They do not get much of anything but suckers in the fyke nets. The pickerel will not run into them, and the bull-heads are gone now. There has not

suckers
walleye
bullheads ✓

been any bull-heads this last 3 or 4 years. There has been none since the dredge came here to dredge the river put deeper. The dredge would take up half a bushel at a lick sometimes. They have never used any

dredging

Seines ✓

seines here since I came here. They fish
use here, but they were a good deal of it.

quite a good deal with the hook and line and get bass, pickerel and pike, just simply for sport, no commercial fishing with hook and lines.

Hook
Sport

The average size of the whitefish when I started in would be from 3 to 8 lbs. Now it is only once in a while that you will get one weighing 7 or 8 lbs. and they go down to about 2 lbs. They will not average over 2 1/2 lbs. When I first came here they would average at least 4 lbs.

W. f.
size
decrease

Have no trouble here from the mills, only just in the river the sawdust bothers some. About 5 or 7 years ago the river used to be full of sawdust, but they stopped it. One thing that is killing some of these fish is the tannery about 2 miles up the river, and there is lots of liquid that they let run into the river. The law does not oblige them to burn their sawdust and refuse here, but they burn a good deal of it.

Sawmills

Tannery

Since the tannery has been here the fish
have been very scarce in the river.

Never saw any eels here .

Eels.

